



the Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

VOLUME 36

NUMBER 4

DECEMBER 2011



JOIN YOUR LOCAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT!



Bigfork CBC: Our 38th Year

This year's **Bigfork Christmas Bird Count** will be held **Saturday, December 17**. Stretching from Egan Slough to Woods Bay and from the Jewel Basin Road to Caroline Point, this count is always one of the most productive in Montana. We have seen nearly 150 species on this count since it was first run in 1974. Last year we had record numbers of Redheads (2,000) in Somers Bay, Bald Eagles (60), and Blue Jays (39) among the 83 species counted, on a windy, snowy day with seasonal temperatures (6-24°F). Last year a White-winged Scoter and a Long-eared Owl topped the list. This count typically depends on veteran group leaders to scour their usual areas, and we are always looking for additional participants to join in to help us gain a better understanding of our early winter bird populations. We will begin preparation for the count at the December 12 Flathead Audubon meeting, and will finalize groups before the count day. Contact Dan at danielcasey55@gmail.com, or at 857-3143.

Kalispell CBC on New Year's Day

The **Kalispell Christmas Bird Count** is centered at Reserve and Highway 93, and includes Evergreen, much of the Flathead River corridor, including the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, Happy Valley, Herron Park, and the Kuhn's Wildlife Area. It has proven to be a popular New Year's tradition. This year's (thirteenth annual) count will be on **Sunday, January 1**. Last year's Eurasian Wigeon was just the second ever in the history of Montana counts, and we had our first Northern Hawk Owl and Varied Thrush (long-predicted in Dan's annual talks). Our traditional start to this count is a group breakfast at 7:00 AM; **this year we will again meet at the Montana Club on Highway 93 South** to assign circle segments and set up teams. To participate, sign up and leave your contact information at the December general meeting, or contact Dan Casey at his home daniel-casey55@gmail.com (857-3143) or his office dcasey@abcbirds.org (756-2681).

NW Montana Christmas Bird Counts: December 2011 - January 2012

Saturday, December 17

Bigfork	Dan Casey—contact info above	
Eureka	Lynda or Lewis Young	889-3492
Libby	Sandra Gerber slariver@frontiernet.net	293-4948
Upper Swan	Jody Wolff jmw4002@blackfoot.net	754-4002



Sunday, December 18

Ninepipe NWR	Brian Williams btwilliams11@hotmail.com	H: 721-1467; W: 327-0405
Glacier NP	Susan Sindt	892-7406

Sunday, January 1

Kalispell	Dan Casey—contact info above
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Date To Be Announced

Troy	Don Jones gr8gray@frontiernet.net	295-4291
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itsnature.org

DECEMBER FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, December 12, 2011: Flathead Audubon General Meeting. 7 PM at The Summit. Dan Casey presents "Flathead CBC Prep Talk." Details on page 3.

Monday, December 5, 2011: Flathead Audubon Board of Directors Meeting. 6 PM at 295 Third Ave. E.N. All are welcome.



BIRD OF THE MONTH

By Mary Nelesen

Osprey, the Fish Hawk

The osprey, like several of my friends and neighbors, has gone south for the winter seeking a warmer climate. And like my snow-bird friends, I know the osprey will return in the spring.

I became interested in ospreys while watching the webcam at St. Mary's in Glacier National Park last summer. For those of you who may not be familiar with this webcam, it is located on the St. Mary's Visitor Center just inside the east entrance of Glacier National Park on the Going to the Sun Road. The webcam is focused on a pole with a nesting platform. The webcams can be viewed on the park website, www.nps/glac.gov.

According to Bill Hayden, the park's Interpretive Specialist, a pair of osprey returned to the platform in early spring, on approximately April 17 or 18, 2011. The pair was frequently seen by park staff and was observed mating on May 15. On May 19, the male was found dead. He apparently flew into some nearby power lines. The female stayed close by the nest for about a week before leaving the platform. A new pair of ospreys was observed on the nest, but it was thought to be too late in the season for them to raise young. Throughout the rest of the summer, I would occasionally catch sight of a variety of birds perched on the platform but, alas, no osprey chicks.

Ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*), sometimes known as sea hawks or fish eagles, are diurnal fish-eating birds of prey. They can be confused with bald eagles but can be identified by their white underparts. Their white heads have a distinctive black eye stripe that goes down the side of their face. Eagles and ospreys share similar habitats and sometimes battle for food. Eagles often force osprey to drop fish that they have caught and sometimes steal them in midair.

Ospreys are superb fishers and eat little else – fish make up 99% of their diet. They have barbed

pads on the soles of their feet, which helps them grip slippery fish. When carrying a large fish, they carry the fish head-first, to be as aerodynamic as possible. Because of their diet, they can be found near ponds, rivers, lakes and coastal waterways around the world. Ospreys are found on every continent, with the exception of Antarctica.

The sexes appear fairly similar, but the adult male can be distinguished from the female by a slimmer body and narrower wings. In addition, the breast band of the male is also weaker than that of the female, or is non-existent, and the underwing coverts of the male are more uniformly pale. Their call is a strong, clear "cheep," given in a slow, regular cadence, or a faster piping "peep-peep-peep."

Most ospreys are migratory birds that breed in the north and migrate south for the winter. They usually lay 2 to 4 eggs, which both parents help incubate. According to Cornell's Lab of Ornithology, osprey eggs do not hatch all at once, but instead the first chick hatches up to five days before the last one. The older chick dominates its younger siblings, and can monopolize the food brought by the parents. If food is abundant, little aggression is seen among the chicks, but if food is limited, the younger chicks often starve.

The platform/pole outside the St. Mary's Visitor Center in GNP was placed there by Glacier Electric. Artificial nesting platforms are common in areas such as St. Mary's, where preservationists are working to reestablish the osprey. Despite its population rebound, the osprey's survival still depends upon the kindness of strangers who place poles and platforms along our waterways. So until next spring, I'll look forward to the ospreys' return, with the hope of watching a new family take up residence at St. Mary's in Glacier National Park.



Ron Kube Photo

GOT THE TRAVEL BUG?

Registration opens in January for Nebraska's famed Rivers and Wildlife Celebration. Gather with wildlife enthusiasts from around the world to celebrate the annual migration of 500,000 sandhill cranes and millions of waterfowl through the heart of the Central Flyway. The Rivers and Wildlife Celebration is Nebraska's crane festival and the nation's longest running wildlife festival. The agenda features a variety of field trips to choose from to see cranes, waterfowl, prairie chickens, and other birds and wildlife. Dates of the Celebration are March 15–18, 2012. For details, photos, registration and hotel/motel information visit nebraskacranefestival.org.



Flathead CBC Prep Talk

Dan Casey will continue the annual tradition of setting the stage for the Christmas Bird Count season with our December program, **Monday December 12**. Dan always entertains, with a wonderful selection of his bird photos, some "virtual birding," and will share some insight into what CBC data tell us about bird distribution and populations. He will summarize how to conduct the counts, what to expect, and what makes our local counts unique among Montana counts. The talk will conclude with preparations for the upcoming Flathead Valley counts (all listed on page 1).



This promises to be an interesting and timely presentation. Please join us on Monday, December 12, at 7 PM in the Conference Room of The Summit in Kalispell.



Jeannie Marcure

HOLIDAY SHOPPING at the SALES TABLE

We have just received some fabulous note cards drawn by local artist Jim Jokerst. These are charcoal drawings of local birds, boxed as a gift set of 12, for only \$10.

Also, we have 6 different styles of Audubon calendars for sale, just \$11. Many books about birds are also available at discount prices.

All of these quality, inexpensive gifts are available at the FAS Sales Table at our December 12 general meeting. Come early for best selection!

Jill Fanning, Sales Director



Invitation—Spontaneous Cross-Country Skiing and/or Snowshoe Field Trips

If you are interested in exploring the Swan River Wildlife Refuge during the winter by ski or snowshoe, send your email address to Kathy Ross at mtkat@montanaport.net. During January and February, I will email you when good snow conditions allow for tracking and birding field trips that could happen in the next day or so. (Because snow conditions change so quickly, you go for it when you can, whether it be weekday or weekend.) The Refuge is an

exciting landscape of many stories written on the snow by the mammals and birds who winter there. Trips will be 1-3 hours of easy skiing. Always dress warm and come prepared for all kinds of winter conditions, bringing some food and water along with binoculars. Details will be decided on at the time of the trips. The Refuge closes on March 1 to protect nesting birds; access is still available after March 1 to the viewing area but not beyond signed areas.



What Goes Around Comes Around

In a perfect world, there would be no pollution, no waste, no over-population, no toxics, no littering. Since we aren't quite to that Utopia yet, it's very important that we each do our part to get to those goals. You know how it's done – Reduce, Re-use, Recycle, and Refuse. One of these – Recycling – gives us an opportunity to Reduce waste, toxics, and littering, and to Re-use the materials for other purposes, cutting down on the need to make new plastics, paper, rubber, glass, etc. Most people are quite willing to recycle their household items if the process is easy. They need to know what to recycle and where to recycle. The most common items that you may recycle are newspapers, aluminum cans, milk bottles, cardboard boxes, and paper such as magazines, catalogs and junk mail. All of these can be put into the large blue recycling bins that are placed all over the Flathead Valley. To help you find such a bin easily, here's a list of locations.

Smith's Grocery, Kalispell
 Albertson's Grocery, Kalispell
 Super 1 Foods, Kalispell
 Flathead County Landfill
 All County Green Box Sites
 Flathead High School Parking Lot
 Glacier High School Parking Lot
 Flathead Middle School Parking Lot
 Smith Valley School Parking Lot
 Tire-Rama, Highway 93 South of Kalispell



Flathead Valley Community College
 Evergreen Army-Navy Store
 Valley Recycling
 Whitefish City Beach Overflow Parking Lot
 Business Park north of Cowboy Cabin on Wisconsin Ave., Whitefish
 Kalispell Avenue, between 6th and 7th Streets, Whitefish
 Alley behind Whitefish City Hall



As you can see, your weekly grocery shopping trip can double as your recycling drop-off, or you can swing by a blue bin when you take your kids to school. Maybe you know of other blue bin locations. We will give you locations for other types of recycling in future *Pileated Posts*.

Kay Mitchell



BOARD MEMBER CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

From
Denny Olson, FAS Board



No Child Left Inside

It's morning. An obese sixth-grader, with the ADHD-ed attention span of a shrew, sits gobbling hydrogenated trans-fat chips and high fructose corn syruped/caffeinated soda, iPod pounding into both ears, gory-kill-everything-in-sight video game blaring over the top of the ear-buds. Later, the same child is on the way to school, walking into parked cars while texting a pal with thumbs flying, iPod still blaring.

At school, he is sitting most of the day, preparing for the next test, sometimes in a windowless room. The school now views recess and physical education classes as inefficient use of critical test-preparation time. Of course, the ADHD takes its usual toll, and somewhere during the day this student finds himself in trouble with authority because he just can't sit still for any length of time.

He feels resentful and shamed, and can't wait to get home to the release of blowing up everything in sight with the controls of the X-Box. That is followed up by eight straight hours of TV, where he is bombarded with gossip about famous-for-nothings, "reality" shows that glorify immaturity and dishonesty, talent contests judged by rude egomaniacs which show him how inadequate he really should feel, and hundreds of commercials all promising him that he is only a purchase away from feeling better. In the intervening sit-coms, three-word sentences are followed by laugh-tracks, the same soothing cadence of speech patterns that have graced his awareness – and formed his own speech patterns -- since he was a baby lying on the couch.

Mom and Dad are long-since asleep, exhausted from working hard for not very much, and our sixth-grader drifts off with remote in hand, the flickering light of the television the only light in his room.

Generalization? Yes. But the description is hardly an overstatement for many kids. This is the virtual, abstract world where they live.

"Why can't schools do an adequate job of teaching children?" "Why do our students underperform kids in other parts of the world?"

Valid questions, yes, but with relatively obvious answers – answers that some folks just don't want to hear.

Reality check. Over the course of a year, children spend one-fifth (20%) of their time under the influence of school. The other 80% of their time

is all too often described above. During that twenty-percent school time, an inordinate amount of energy is directed toward content-heavy test preparation -- by most kids' standards, boring beyond belief. This is not the teachers' fault. This system inadvertently punishes creativity used toward engagement strategies. Time is at a premium, and the standardized test content must be covered. We have completely forgotten that "learning" is accomplished by engaged and motivated students, not by teachers and administrators scared for their jobs.

So, we have to face the reality that kids are being "schooled" during *all* of their waking hours.

Blaming formal schooling for the condition of our kids flies in the face of facts. Education happens everywhere and all the time, and is much, much broader and deeper than "school." Confining "education" to the school building, television, computers, the city and its suburbs is akin to expecting well-rounded humans to emerge from a sensory deprivation chamber.

The key to effective classroom learning may well be getting *out* of the classroom on a regular basis. In fact, research shows that the outdoor time doesn't even have to be structured to be effective. We have come to believe that education is solely an indoor activity. The sheer artificiality of four walls and a roof as "our world" has not been recognized for its absurdity. It is nearly impossible in many cases, to free up some bus dollars for an outdoor field trip, but millions are spent on football games, and billions are spent on advertising the correct shoes to wear while playing the game. Educational priorities reflect cultural priorities.

That's why we do the Audubon Outdoor Education Program. Because of cultural priorities (everything will be fine if we constantly "grow" and everybody buys lots of stuff), schools are unable to help fix the other 80% of the education our children receive. They are confined by misguided mandates and funding levels far below schools' importance to our future.

Nature deficit disorder is a disease, brought on by the inactivity, confinement and conformity expectations of our entire culture, including indoor-only schools. Hyperactivity is only a "syndrome" when kids are inactive and confined. It was never an issue (*NO CHILD LEFT INSIDE, continued on next page*)

(*NO CHILD LEFT INSIDE*, continued from page 4 ...)

... in agrarian, outdoor America a hundred years ago. Obesity, early heart disease, ADD, hyperconsumerism, and probably most importantly, a sense of *disconnection* from the rest of a *totally* connected world – these are symptoms of the disease. In a tiny, tiny way, Audubon is trying to begin the healing.

The Audubon Outdoor Program is not about having some extra recess “fun-time” at the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area. Ultimately, it’s not even about learning the wonderful life-long skills of birding. It is *lots* bigger than that. It is about a life-long, life-changing sense of belonging to the rest of the

world, of not having to feel alone, of peace and quiet, of contemplation skills, of radically increased attention spans, of self-awareness and self-worth, and of re-acquaintance with where we originated, and where we are going.

Sounds a little like “school” to me ...

I hope you agree, And, I encourage you to help support this critical program with a financial contribution. It is free to the kids, but it is not “free.”

(*Audubon board member Denny Olson is a life-long teaching naturalist and storyteller. His career choices can be attributed to a lot of childhood play in the Minnesota woods.*)



FLATHEAD AUDUBON MISSION STATEMENT

THE FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY IS A LOCAL CHAPTER
OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY.



- ◆ OUR MISSION IS TO CONSERVE BIRDS, WILDLIFE HABITAT, AND ECOSYSTEM DIVERSITY.
- ◆ WE PROMOTE AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION OF THE NATURAL WORLD THROUGH EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND ADVOCACY PROGRAMS.
- ◆ WE WORK WITH DIVERSE GROUPS AND AGENCIES TO ACHIEVE SOUND DECISIONS ON NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES.
- ◆ WHILE FOCUSING OUR EFFORTS IN NORTHWEST MONTANA, WE BELIEVE IN THE PROTECTION OF THE EARTH AND ALL OF ITS INHABITANTS.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR, MARK IN INK: *Wings Across the Big Sky*

June 8–10, 2012, Kalispell, Montana



The time has arrived! ... to begin planning and spreading the word that **Montana Audubon's Annual Bird Festival *Wings Across the Big Sky*, co-hosted by Flathead Audubon Society**, is June 8–10 in Kalispell. We anticipate a great turnout, but as always, not without your help and enthusiasm: Invite your out-of-state and nearby friends, birders and nonbirders alike, to visit the Flathead Valley and surrounding areas where you can plan on participating in abundant festival activities, including for the second time, the popular pre-festival conservation workshops.

Our theme this year, “Birding and Conservation: The Crown of the Continent,” will bring in top-notch experts and speakers for the Saturday afternoon presentations and new and ever-popular guided field trips, which will include nearby Glacier National Park (popular for Harlequin Ducks, American Dipper, and Northern Hawk Owls, among many other species) and Flathead Valley's wetlands and riparian areas, with a large variety of migrating waterfowl and neotropical visitors. Pre- and post-festival field trips beyond the Valley are also in the planning stages. And as always, you can count on fabulously fun Friday and Saturday evenings with new and traditional events in the works.

Festival headquarters is located at the Hilton Garden Inn on the south edge of Kalispell off of US Highway 93. The venue is adequately spacious and centrally located for convenient access to field trip destinations.

For more information contact Montana Audubon Bird Festival Coordinator, Larissa Berry at lberry@mtaudubon.org or 406-443-3949 or any Board Member of Flathead Audubon.

Sponsors of FAS Conservation Education Program

Tyler Bebee, Senior Financial Consultant
TBebee@dadco.com
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200 First Ave. E., K-M Building
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Thanks!

...to those below who have made special donations to Flathead Audubon from October 18 through November 18.

Snowy Owl \$250+
Bob Lopp



Dan Casey Photo

Kestrel \$50+
Charles McCarty



nbnature.org

Supporting Member + donation
Pat McClelland
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granderie.ca

SPECIAL GIFTS

I wish to help make Flathead Audubon's vision a reality. Here is my contribution to the continued success of our chapter.



Dave Menke, USFWS

- Eagle Donation, \$1000+
 - Osprey Donation, \$500+
 - Snowy Owl Donation, \$250+
 - Merlin Donation, \$100+
 - Kestrel Donation, \$50+
 - My Own Vision, amount of my choice
- * * * *

The FAS activity which most interests me is:

- Education Programs
 - Owen Sowerwine Natural Area
 - Scholarships and Grants
 - Field Trips and Outdoor Events
- * * * *

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Please make checks payable to:

Flathead Audubon Society

P.O. Box 9173

Kalispell, MT 59904

Your gift is tax deductible.



The Great Backyard Bird Count: February 17-20, 2012

On February 17, Kathy Ross will lead a field trip to identify and count birds in the Swan River/Echo Lake area. Meet at the north end of Swan River School parking lot at 9:00 until noon. We will carpool from there, exploring the winter landscape along the Swan River for waterfowl. We'll check out a few feeders along the way, as well as wooded areas for pygmy owls, golden-crowned kinglets, Townsend's solitaires, several chickadee species and, hopefully, flocks of crossbills and common redpolls. Bring binoculars, spotting scopes, warm clothing and your enthusiasm to experience our local winter feathered residents. Please contact Kathy at 837-3837 if you wish to join the field trip or have questions.

KIDZ



Spring Peer Mentoring Program

O

For the past two springs, Flathead Audubon Society has sponsored a cross-age peer mentoring program at Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, now titled "Get Out." This program is a partnership with the Flathead Conservation District, Flathead High School Orion Program, Fair-Mont Egan School and Kalispell Montessori. During the three day program, students from Flathead High School's Orion Program, many of whom are at risk of dropping out of school, mentor younger students from Kalispell Montessori and Fair-Mont Egan through a series of watershed education stations set up at OSNA. Stations include bird identification, watershed restoration and nature journaling. The project's goal is to increase watershed knowledge and stewardship of the local environment, as well as to inspire personal discovery and growth and get students outside and exploring the world around them. Jaki-Rain Bruner, a Flathead High School student who participated in the program writes about her experience:

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The "Get Out" Owen Sowerwine trip I had with my tenth grade Orion class was amazing. It's an opportunity that most don't get and that I would love to have again. First, there was the bird watching. It was really fun to have a contest of who could be more quiet, the second or tenth graders? We got to see some birds, but everyone was super excited when we found some turtles.

Next, the weed-pulling. Personally, I thought, "Wow, this is going to be so retarded." But yet again it turned into a fun and exciting contest between the grades. Each person was digging up weeds, trying to be the person who found the biggest, fattest weed.

Last, and my personal favorite, writing/listening - Nature Journaling. We had to go find a spot away from the others where we wouldn't be disturbed. As I sat there and everyone quieted down, the nature around us seemed to sing a song. Birds chirping, bees buzzing, even some woodpeckers and butterflies. We each drew a picture of our surroundings and what we each heard. Then we got in a circle and shared our pictures.



Overall the day was great; fresh air is exactly what we need more of in school - a nature day to help out our environment and get out of the classroom. Preserve nature and keep our earth clean. I really enjoyed this experience and hope to get the chance to do it again this year.

For more information about this program, please contact Ashley Mason, Flathead Audubon Society's Conservation Educator, at AudubonAshley@gmail.com.

EDUCATOR'S EVALUATION



I am Rob Ford, an English teacher at Flathead High School and was fortunately able to involve my students in a peer-mentoring project at Owen Sowerwine Natural Area in early May for two consecutive years. The first year, 2010, it was called "Together Green" and then in 2011 we called it "Get Out." The focus, with the Flathead Audubon Society Education Program, was to allow high school students to connect with nature alongside elementary school children. They were introduced to our local Flathead watershed, specifically the Stillwater River. My sophomore, junior and senior students thrived in this program because they were able to teach what they know to the younger kids and be outside for a full school day. Any time spent outside in a beautiful place is quality time spent. This was a structured time with three stations that the high school and elementary students rotated through: bird identification, non-native weed pulling and nature journaling. My students were surprised at how enthusiastic the younger kids were for everything. I was witness to many of my students smiling and being more engaged than I had ever seen them and this gave me a great amount of satisfaction at the close of the school year. I know from their unanimous feedback that the Owen Sowerwine field trip was a highlight in their high school careers and have had several students inquire about doing it again this year. I am all for it. These adolescents need time outside for both their physical and spiritual education. Indeed, I don't mind a day outside, away from the walls of the high school, myself.

School & Teacher Contacts

Are you a teacher or do you know a teacher who is passionate about science/conservation education? We are compiling a list of teachers in the Flathead Valley who are interested and would benefit from FAS Education Programs. If you or someone you know would like to be included in our regular education updates, please contact Ashley at AudubonAshley@gmail.com with your information.





DECEMBER 2011



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The Flathead Audubon Society is affiliated with Montana Audubon and the National Audubon Society. Flathead Audubon meets on the second Monday of each month from September through May. Meetings start at 7:00PM and include a featured guest who presents a conservation or nature program. The Board of Directors meet the Monday preceding the general meeting, at 6PM at 295 3rd Ave. EN, in Kalispell. Both meetings are open to all those interested.

THE PILEATED POST is published September through May and is sent to members of Flathead Audubon Society as a membership benefit. For membership information or address change, please call Mike Fanning at 862-8070. To receive this newsletter electronically, email your request to: lindawin@centurytel.net. **Deadline for newsletter copy is the 18th of each month. Contact newsletter editor at 755-1406; email submissions to: lindawin@centurytel.net**

Website: www.FlatheadAudubon.org

FlockMaster - John Kyle: jkyle@fastmail.us

Conservation Educator - Ashley Mason: AudubonAshley@gmail.com

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

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2009-2012	Dennis Hester	(kiyotee@bresnan.net)	755-4964
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2011-2012	Jill Fanning	(shrdlu@centurytel.net)	862-8070

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Newsletter	Linda Winnie	755-1406			
	Kay Mitchell	756-8130			
Nominations	Linda deKort	755-3704			
Program	Richard Kuhl	257-5793			

MONTANA AUDUBON

P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624
443-3949

www.MTAudubon.org

Executive Director: Steve Hoffman

shoffman@mtaudubon.org

Board President: Dan Sullivan
443-4229



FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY



Membership
Individual or Family

Basic Membership \$20
(Pays for newsletter and operating costs)

Supporting Membership \$35
(Extra \$15 funds local projects such as grants, scholarships, meetings, and Christmas Bird Count)

Additional Donation of \$ _____
to Education Fund
Owen Sowerwine Fund
Wherever needed

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ - _____

Email _____

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